

**Universal Periodic Review (39th session)  
Contribution of UNESCO**

**Suriname**

**I. Background and framework**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession, acceptance or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
<i>Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960</i>	Not a State Party	Reservation to this Convention shall not be permitted		Right to education
<i>Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)</i>	23/10/1997 Acceptance			Right to take part in cultural life
<i>Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)</i>	05/09/2017 Ratification			Right to take part in cultural life
<i>Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)</i>	Not ratified			Right to take part in cultural life

**II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground**

**A. Education**

1. The Constitution of Suriname of 1987<sup>1</sup> enshrines the right to education in article 38 “Everyone shall have a right to education and cultural expression” and non-discrimination in article 8: “... No one shall be discriminated against on the grounds of

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/dfcff4209dad7879549a7d46dc0bcfb82919c591.pdf>

birth, sex, race, language, religious origin, education, political beliefs, economic position or any other status". Furthermore, the Constitution states in article 39 that the State is under the obligation to ensure free and compulsory primary education and to progressively extend free education at all levels.

2. The main law regulating education is the Education Act of 1960,<sup>2</sup> applying only to primary education. Article 20 does not phrase compulsory education as such but specifies that parents, or guardians are obliged to provide regular primary education to pupils aged 7-12 years, but exemptions can be granted.

## **B. Freedom of opinion and expression**

### Constitutional and Legislative Framework

3. Freedom of Expression is protected in Article 19 of the Constitution of Suriname.<sup>3</sup>
4. Defamation (Art. 320 and 321 of the criminal code) is regarded as a criminal offense and can be punished by fines or prison terms for up to three years.<sup>4</sup>
5. There is no freedom of information legislation in Suriname.

### Implementation of legislation

6. The Surinamese Telecommunications Authority is the telecommunications regulator of the country. The Director of this authority is named by the Surinamese President upon suggestion by the Minister of Transport, Communication and Tourism.<sup>5</sup>
7. The major journalists' union in Suriname is the Surinamese Union of Journalists (SVJ). It has a code of conduct and offers trainings on ethical and professional conduct.

### Safety of journalists

8. UNESCO has recorded no killing of journalists in Suriname since systematic reporting began in 2008.

## **III. Review and specific recommendations**

### **A. Education**

#### Legislative, regulatory and policy framework:

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dna.sr/wetgeving/surinaamse-wetten/geldende-teksten-tm-2005/de-lager-onderwijswet-1960/>

<sup>3</sup> See the Constitution of Suriname on the government's website:

<http://www.gov.sr/themas/wetgeving/grondwet/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://wipolex.wipo.int/en/text/209839>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mintct.sr/telecom/H2.htm> (in Dutch only)

- A Draft Primary Education and Supervision Act is currently being discussed.<sup>6</sup> It clearly states that primary education is compulsory and extends the duration for 11 years, starting at age 4 until 16 years old, which is in line with the Education 2030 agenda. This would represent an improvement vis-a-vis the current legislation that only obliges parents to provide primary education to their children from 7 to 12 years old.
- According to the law containing rules with regard to registration fee and other costs per type of education/level in Suriname,<sup>7</sup> there is no registration fee for nursery education, primary education, more advanced primary education and lower vocational education. However, other costs might apply, up to 250 SRD but parents or guardians who can't pay the costs may submit a petition to the Ministry of Education.

### Alignment of ages

- According to the labor code, minimum age for work is 14 years old, while compulsory education ends at 12, therefore the two ages are not aligned. If the draft Primary Education and supervision act is adopted, raising the age of compulsory education to 16 years old, it would be important to amend the labor code in order to ensure the alignment of ages.

### Corporal Punishment

- Regarding corporal punishment in schools, the State has reported that there is a ministerial decision to prohibit it but that there is no existing legislation.

### Covid-19 response

- Suriname organized a nation-wide school closure around the 17 of March.<sup>8</sup>

### **Specific recommendations:**

9. Suriname should be encouraged to:

- Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education.
- Pursue its efforts to adopt the draft primary and supervision education act, especially as it raises the duration of compulsory education to eleven years.
- Ensure that there is no gap between the age of end of compulsory education and legal age to work, especially by amending the labor law if the new age at which compulsory education ends (16) is adopted.
- Prohibit corporal punishment in schools in the legal framework.
- Submit regularly comprehensive national reports for the periodic consultations on UNESCO's education-related standard-setting instruments, and notably on the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dna.sr/wetgeving/ontwerp-wetten-bij-dna/in-behandeling/ontwerp-wet-wet-primair-onderwijs-en-toezicht/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.dna.sr/media/253725/Ontwerp-wet\\_Wet\\_inschrijfgelden\\_en\\_materiaal\\_kosten\\_voor\\_onderwijsinstellingen.pdf](http://www.dna.sr/media/253725/Ontwerp-wet_Wet_inschrijfgelden_en_materiaal_kosten_voor_onderwijsinstellingen.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

- Share with UNESCO any relevant information to update its country profile on UNESCO's Observatory on the Right to Education.<sup>9</sup>

### **B. Freedom of opinion and expression**

10. It is recommended that the Government decriminalize defamation and place it within a civil code that is in accordance with international standards.<sup>10</sup>
11. Suriname is encouraged to introduce a freedom of information law that is in accordance with international standards.<sup>11</sup>
12. The Government should enable a media ecosystem that fosters self-regulatory approaches and media independence, including through an independent media regulator, in line with international standards.

### **C. Cultural rights**

13. As a State Party to the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)<sup>12</sup> and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)<sup>13</sup>, Suriname is encouraged to fully implement the relevant provisions that promote access to and participation in cultural heritage and creative expressions and, as such, are conducive to implementing the right to take part in cultural life as defined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In doing so, Suriname is encouraged to give due consideration to the participation of communities, practitioners, cultural actors and NGOs from the civil society as well as vulnerable groups (minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants, refugees, young peoples and peoples with disabilities), and to ensure that equal opportunities are given to women and girls to address gender disparities.
14. Suriname is also encouraged to ratify the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) so as to complete its policy and legislative frameworks to enhance support to the implementation of the right to take part in cultural life.

### **D. Freedom of scientific research and the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications**

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/index.php?action=countries&lng=en>

<sup>10</sup> See for example, General Comments No 34. of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 2006 Recommendation of the 87<sup>th</sup> Session Human Rights Committee, the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and Resolution 1577 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, General Comments No 34. of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 2006 Recommendation of the 87<sup>th</sup> Session Human Rights Committee, the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, and Resolution 1577 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

<sup>12</sup> Periodic Report available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/document/123037>

<sup>13</sup> Periodic Report not available

15. **Suriname** did not submit its National Report on the implementation of the Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers (1974) for the Second Consultation covering the period from 2013 to 2016 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002592/259256e.pdf>). Therefore Suriname is encouraged to report to UNESCO on the implementation of the newly adopted Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers (2017), which supersedes the 1974 Recommendation, on any legislative or other steps undertaken by it with the aim to ensure the application of this international standard-setting instrument paying a particular attention to the legal provisions and regulatory frameworks which ensure the implementation of human rights of scientific researchers, as well as human rights obligations related to science, the principle of non-discrimination, including urging active promotion of women and girls entering scientific careers, as well as the scientists' rights of autonomy, freedom of research, expression and publication.